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Work force cuts needed, Beach writes in response to Trachtenberg

County News | Erin Cunningham

Restructuring Montgomery County government will only result in long-term savings if there is a reduction in the work force, according to a memo from Joseph Beach, the county's director of the Office of Management and Budget.

County Executive Isiah Leggett's (D) proposed fiscal 2011 budget did not include extensive restructuring because officials said they could cut costs primarily by freezing employee wages and reducing service levels, Beach wrote in his memo to Councilwoman Duchy Trachtenberg (D-At large) of North Bethesda.

That memo was sent Tuesday.

Beach was responding to one of several questions posed by Trachtenberg, who chairs the council's Management and Fiscal Policy Committee, in an April 5 memo.

Trachtenberg also asked for an update on the Inter-Agency Restructuring Work Group, which was discussed several weeks ago. It's a proposed task force of representatives from county agencies that could develop ways to reduce spending and share resources.

"Reorganizations can be useful for streamlining services, focusing responsibility and accountability, and fostering greater responsiveness, but often do not produce substantial long-term cost savings," Beach wrote.

Trachtenberg said it was important to focus on fiscal 2011 and beyond.

The United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1994/Municipal and County Government Employees Organization has lobbied for a task force to study county reorganization for years, said union Special Assistant to the President Gail Heath.

However, Heath said the union has been left out of the discussions.

"We have a bloated management structure in Montgomery County," she said of an issue the union would like addressed. "It is out of control."

Elrich has just said 'no'

There has been no shortage of lobbying in the Montgomery County Council offices, Councilman Marc Elrich (D-At large) of Takoma Park said Tuesday.

Elrich has met with many people who want money restored in the county's fiscal 2011 budget for worthy projects and services, and he has said the same thing to all of them: "No."

"I've told everyone I'm not putting a dime back in the budget," he said.

The council learned Tuesday that County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) will revise his budget proposal to include an additional \$168 million in cuts.

Elrich said it is understood that no "pet projects" will be pushed through this year. "I can't think about how I add that without imagining where I'll subtract it from," he said.

Council to honor county environmental leaders

The Montgomery County Council will recognize 40 environmentalists who have made a difference in Montgomery County in the past 40 years in honor of the 40th anniversary of Earth Day, according to a news release.

Nominations were accepted through Friday, and honorees will be recognized Tuesday in a "40 Environmentalists in 40 Years" tribute.

The tribute will take place during the council's regularly scheduled meeting, the release states.

"Starting with Silver Spring resident Rachel Carson, who is widely considered the mother of the modern environmental movement, Montgomery County has a rich history of environmental advancement," said Council President Nancy M. Floreen (D-At large) of Garrett Park, who chairs the council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee. "The '40 Environmentalists in 40 Years' awards will pay homage to that history and to the individuals who shaped it."

Knapp holds 'Open Mike'

Councilman Michael J. Knapp (D-Dist. 2) of Germantown will hold an "Open Mike" meeting Monday to discuss the county budget and other issues, according to a news release.

Knapp's event will be held in Room B of the Germantown Library, 19840 Century Blvd., in Germantown.

About 70 percent have returned census forms

As of the second week of April, about 70 percent of Montgomery County residents had completed their 2010 U.S. census forms.

"This is good, but not good enough," said Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett (D) in a news release. "It is not too late to mail back census forms, and I encourage all our residents to check with family, friends and neighbors to remind them to fill out and return their forms, too. Thousands of federal dollars will be lost for every county resident we fail to count."

Montgomery County residents who did not receive a census form in the mail, or who need a replacement form, can call 866-872-6868 until April 21, the release states.

Beginning May 1, census workers will begin visiting households that have not returned completed their forms.

The U.S. Census Bureau also has set up 80 Census Questionnaire Assistance Centers in Montgomery County, which will be open through Monday, the release states. To find the nearest center, call 240-777-1000 or go to the county's Web site at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/census.